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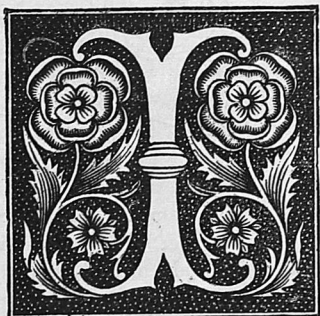
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# DECORATION & FURNITURE

## REFORM IN PIANO SHAPES.



IMPROVEMENTS introduced by Messrs. Broadwood, of London, in the shape and decoration of the grand piano have been noticed from time to time in these columns. One beautiful instrument last autumn was finished for the artist, Alma-Tadema, and decorated by him, the case of the instrument having been constructed after drawings and designs by Mr. G. E. Fox, an architect of repute. Last month we published a description of Mr. Burne-Jones's design and decorations for a grand piano which have just been executed by the same enterprising English firm. The need of improvement in the manufacture of this unnecessarily ungainly article of furniture must sooner or later assert itself in this country, and, of course, then our Webers, Steinways, and Chickering's will have to meet the demand. We confess, though, that we should like to see some American piano-maker enterprising enough to anticipate the demand. To show that the necessity for improvement in this direction is actually felt on the other side of the Atlantic, and that Messrs. Broadwood's efforts in that way are something more than a spasmodic freak growing out of the "art craze" in England, we reproduce from "Der Bazar," a German publication, an illustration of an upright piano, made by Gabriel Seidel, after a design by Rudolph Seitz, the Munich artist. The shape of the upright piano needs reforming as much as that of the grand piano, and it cannot be denied that it is here accomplished with true artistic simplicity. By following the natural form of the instrument, we get a beautiful curve instead of the rigid inartistic parallelogram with which we are all too familiar. Such an improvement as this may be easier for adoption than the experimental change made in the form of the grand piano. Will some American manufacturer try it?

## THE ART OF FURNISHING.\*

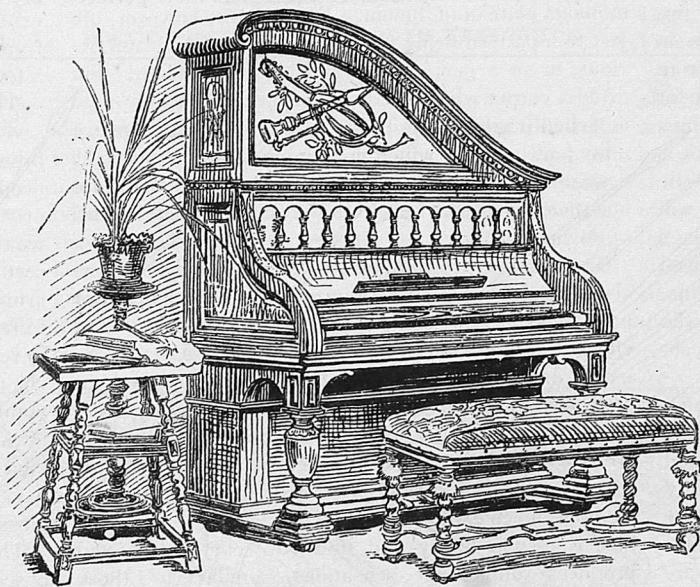
### II. THE DINING-ROOM.

ONE or two considerations meet us at the outset in considering the dining-room. Is the room intended to be used solely, or chiefly, for the purpose of dining? or is it to constitute dining-room, morning-room, breakfast-room, and library in one? In fact, is the greater portion of the day to be spent in this room? If so, let us treat it accordingly, and not hamper ourselves with restrictions as to what is the proper and usual mode to observe in the treatment of a dining-room.

For a dining-room, as such, a certain richness and heaviness of decoration is not unbecoming. Where oil paintings are hung, plain sage or olive green, or dull red walls make a good background; these may be painted, or suitable papers are to be found. Pompeian red has been considerably used, and is very effective with black woodwork. There are likewise the French leather papers, Japanese and real leathers, painted canvas, or even some of the printed cretonnes, and a variety of means open to those who can afford them of covering the walls, all of which however demand, for their rightful carrying out, a panelled dado, painted, or left in the natural wood.

If, however, the room is to be both dining-room and sitting-room, we would have a less conventional treat-

ment. There should be a warmth and quiet cheerfulness, an air of sprightliness and yet repose, and, above all, an absence of monotony. And here we do not think the end can be better answered than by the judicious employment of some of the really decorative papers that are being produced just now. In some of these there is a variety of outline and a blending of subtle tints, which, while forming a comparative monotone against which pictures and objects may stand out, afford, in their absence, a singularly fascinating study for the eye, without being wearisome or over-engrossing. Harmonizing or contrasting dados are usually made for these papers, which heighten their effect, and, at the same time, help to break the line of the wall against which the furniture stands. A dado should be higher or lower than the middle of the wall (usually lower), but must never cut the space into two equal parts. The dado and skirting should not be less than three feet six inches high. No rules can be laid down for the colors to be employed here. If the conditions before mentioned are borne in mind, we do not know that we need limit the use of any subdued tints or well-balanced combinations. The position of the room will again govern the warmth or coolness of the colors. If the ceiling is not decorated, at least there is no reason why the dead chalkiness of the whitewash should not be relieved by the admixture of a little ochre or lake, or other color harmonizing or contrasting with the walls. Excepting with very light walls, a toned ceiling is much



AN ARTISTIC COTTAGE PIANO.

more agreeable than pure white, and costs no more. The tinting of a cornice, or ornamenting a ceiling with bands and lines of color, requires care and some little skill.

As regards the woodwork, the time-honored fashion of graining in imitation of natural woods can only be defended on the score of durability, and the facility with which it can be patched and touched up. Plain colors, harmonizing with the wall colors, are preferable, or even a coating of varnish alone, where the joinery is fairly good. If paint, it can be varnished, which is most lasting, or finished with an "egg-shell gloss."

In room decoration, and in a dining-room especially, a broad massing of colors is far more effective than too much fussy "picking out" of mouldings, and elaboration of delicate lines and arabesque ornament, which, at a little distance, are, for all practical purposes, lost, or worse than thrown away. As for mouldings and projections, it is doubtful whether the labor expended in tinting these produces, in many cases, so good an effect as if they were left to the natural play of light and shade.

Having decorated the walls of the dining-room, it concerns us now to study the various pieces of furniture required, their positions and proportions, so as to

leave room to move about; of what kind of wood, and consequently color, they shall be, and of what their coverings; also the color and texture of our curtains and carpets.

First of all as to the wood. If the walls are dull red you may have ebonized wood, or light oak, or very dark oak, but we cannot recommend mahogany, which is a kind of red orange, nor walnut, which, unless artificially darkened, is too weak a brown against red or crimson. Mahogany or walnut stand well against sage or olive-green, or dull gray-blue. Before deciding, however, on any particular wood, it is best to try the effect of it against the papers you intend to choose for the room.

The furniture of a dining-room should of course be more substantial than that of the drawing-room, and most people will agree with us in claiming for this room at least a degree of simplicity, if not austerity. Redundancy of ornament, a lavish profusion of carving and scroll work, together with arabesque forms of decoration, introducing bunches of grapes and devotees of Bacchus, may be suggestive of unlimited feasting, and suitable to civic banqueting halls. But we are not always feasting, and the maxim that "man eats to live," is better represented by a plain, substantial, and homely kind of furniture, which, by its very simplicity, enhances the viands placed upon it. Nor need such furniture be wanting in beauty, for we would have it exquisitely proportioned and adapted to the wants of a dining-room; and, albeit simple and severe in outline, it need not lack grace and refinement, nor, if desired, costly though unobtrusive and judiciously-restrained enrichment.

In the choice of a sideboard every one must be guided to some extent by his individual tastes. If you have no old china worth showing, do not have a sideboard with a lot of useless shelves. If you like plate glass you may have a good strip of it running the whole length of the sideboard—not too high, say twenty-four inches for an ordinary room. If this is inserted in a frame, so as to stand some inches higher than the sideboard top, it will give all the reflection that is needed. It is better for lightness and variety of effect to divide the plate into three—the centre piece being longer than the end pieces. A bevelled edge is a great improvement to small pieces of plate glass, and gives a gem-like lustre and completeness to the glass. Tiles, painted leather, and carving in low relief, are all effective additions either to a sideboard or a cabinet, but they require taste in adapting, and should always be subservient to the general aim of the work they are introduced upon, and never disturb the unity of the whole. Above all, ornamental details of this sort require to be well executed, and special knowledge and aptitude are necessary to make a good painter of tiles or decorative panels, as a perfectly natural rendering of either figures, flowers, or fruit is too obtrusive a mode of treatment, and brings the objects into undue prominence, thus producing a broken, scattered effect.

In choosing a sideboard, give the preference to straight lines—curves in the constructive lines most surely denote weakness, or occasion loss of room. Round-cornered furniture is perhaps a little less dangerous than square with small children, but this is its sole advantage. Avoid lumps of carving stuck on. They are easily detected, or if you are uncertain, ask the salesman about them. If he knows he will scarcely fail to tell you. See that the doors and drawers are sensibly arranged, and show themselves for what they are, and are provided with handles by which to open them. The key is a bad substitute for a handle.

Besides the sideboard, there are the table, chairs, sofa, and chimney-glass, all of which must harmonize with each other and with the sideboard, though not to the extent some people seem to think, there being something painfully stiff in the too precise matching of each piece of a "set" of furniture in a room. A

\* Adapted for American readers from the English work of H. J. Cooper.